



# **JAMES ROOSE-EVANS**

**11 November 1927**

~

**26 October 2022**

**The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Primrose Hill  
2 Elsworthy Road, London NW3 3DJ**

**Friday 11 November 2022 at 2.30pm**

**Revd Preb. Marjorie Brown**

*Music by  
Dominic Bevan (Tenor) and Makoto James (Organ)*



*Become who you truly are. — Carl Jung*

*My soul, there is a country far beyond the stars. — Henry Vaughan*

*Exultation is the going  
Of an inland soul to sea –  
Past the houses, past the headlands –  
Into deep eternity. — Emily Dickinson*

*Since I am coming into that holy room,  
Where, with thy choir of saints for evermore,  
I shall be made thy music; as I come  
I tune the instrument here at the door,  
And what I must do then, think here before. — John Donne*

*So just as a good mariner when he draws near to the harbour lets down his sails, and enters it gently with slight headway; so we ought to let down the sails of our worldly pursuits and turn to God with all our understanding and heart, so that we may come to the haven with all composure and peace. And our own nature gives us a good lesson in gentleness in so far as there is in such a death no pain or any bitterness, but as a ripe apple lightly without violence detaches itself from its bough, so our soul severs itself without suffering from the body where it has dwelt. — Dante*

*We must not weep at an end  
We are not what we were  
We cannot lose what we have gained  
We have met, we have touched each other with smiles  
Exchanged unknown emotions  
We have embraced without shame  
We have met for a reason  
A brief interlude in time  
And so we part, our purpose done. — David Burrows  
(written for James at the end of his 1973 production of the Chester Mystery Plays)*

*Into thy house I come  
Not unknown or unwelcome  
But received with open arms,  
An embrace that makes me whole.  
From Thee I came  
To Thee I come  
Homing like a pigeon  
After long flight, tasks done. — James Roose-Evans*

*The important thing is not to think too much but to love much. — St Teresa of Ávila*

## ORDER OF SERVICE

### *On arrival*

*Rosalyn Tureck's recording of J S Bach's Goldberg Variations  
which Hywel and James heard her play at the Royal Festival Hall*

### *Introduction and welcome by Marjorie*

It is good that you have come here to say goodbye to James and to send him on his way. I ask all of you to pray with me: Lord, have mercy on him and on all of us.

**All: Lord, have mercy on us.**

Let us pray to God that He will know us by our names and that He will take us into His peace.

**All: Lord, have mercy on us.**

Let us pray that God will speak to us now in these words here and now. O God, You said, 'I will be there.' Do what You have promised.

**All: Lord, have mercy on us.**

Do not deny the work of your hands: this person, whom You have made. We cannot believe that all he meant to other people is lost now, over and done with. But we share the faith by which he held on to You to the very end, to You, his God and ours, to You living for us today and every day, for ever and ever.

**All: Amen.**

*Hymn*

**Guide me, O Thou great Redeemer,  
Pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,  
Hold me with Thy powerful hand:  
Bread of Heaven,  
Feed me till I want no more.**

**Open now the crystal fountain  
Whence the healing stream doth flow,  
Let the fire and cloudy pillar  
Lead me all my journey through;  
Strong deliverer,  
Be Thou still my strength and shield.**

**When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
Bid my anxious fears subside;  
Death of death, and hell's destruction  
Land me safe on Canaan's side;  
Songs of praises  
I will ever give to Thee.**

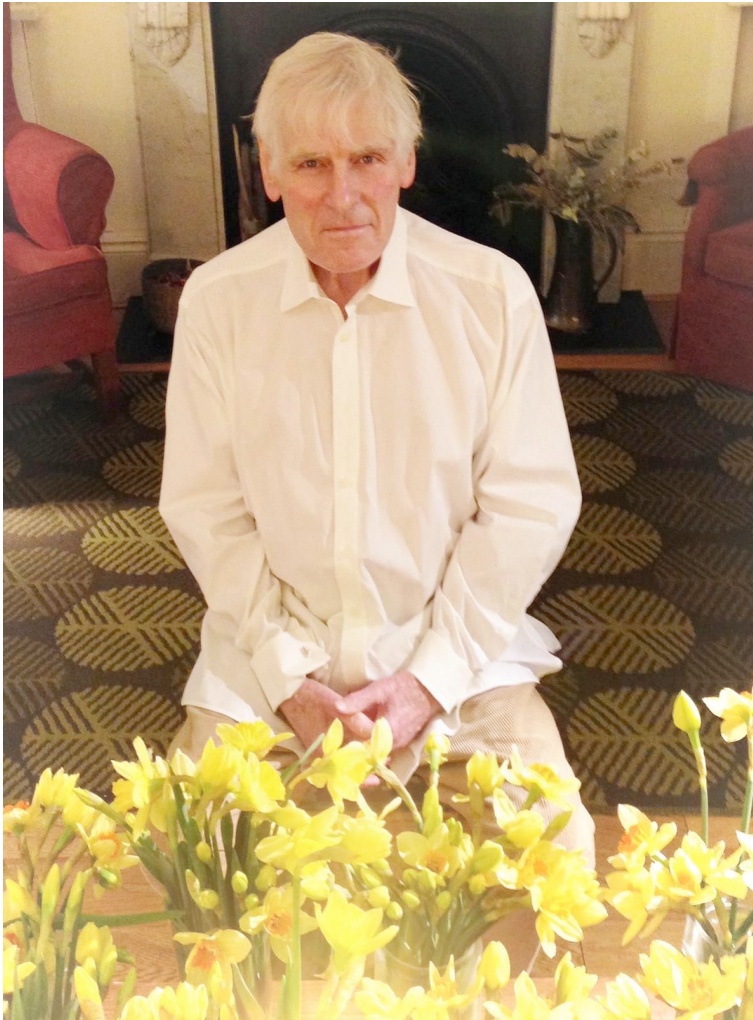
*Reflections by Tony Morris*

*followed by a recording of James speaking three verses from his favourite Psalm*

*Reading by Christina Shewell from James' book 'Finding Silence':*

The world is indeed charged with the grandeur of God. One has only to sit quietly in a garden in spring in the early hours to become aware of the intricate trajectory of invisible lines criss-crossing the garden as birds flit and whirl about their tasks, never colliding. We, too, are birds of passage and yet we are part of the whole. We move through time and yet eternity is all about us. We are all part of the eternal pattern and rhythm of the universe. Therefore we should honour all creation. There is indeed a wisdom in nature. The secret life of trees is itself a subject for meditation. Each year we see enacted the

pattern of our lives, from the first fresh waxen leaves of the chestnut to the rich canopy of summer. Then comes the glory of autumn when the trees in their maturity blaze with new colours before letting fall their raiment to stand naked to the elements. With what recklessness the wind strips the trees bare. But then it is that we see the tree in all its essential beauty of form, acquiring, as we should in age, a new beauty. And yet sap is still rising in the tree and new growth is at work, and so, gazing at the winter trees I am often reminded of George Herbert's words, 'In age I bud again.'



*Hymn: For All the Saints, to the tune of Sine Nomine which was composed by Ralph Vaughan Williams at the request of Percy Dearmer for the congregation of St Mary's*

**For all the saints who from their labours rest,  
Who Thee by faith before the world confest,  
Thy name, O Jesu, be for ever blest,  
Alleluya! Alleluya!**

**And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,  
Steals on the heart the distant triumph song,  
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.  
Alleluya! Alleluya!**

**The golden evening brightens in the west;  
Soon, soon to faithful warriors cometh rest:  
Sweet is the calm of Paradise the blest.  
Alleluya! Alleluya!**

**But lo! There breaks a yet more glorious day;  
The saints triumphant rise in bright array:  
The King of glory passes on His way.  
Alleluya! Alleluya!**

**From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,  
Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,  
Singing to Father, Son and Holy Ghost.  
Alleluya! Alleluya!**



## *Prayer*

God of all consolation, Your son Jesus Christ was moved to tears at the grave of Lazarus his friend. Look with compassion on us in our loss; give to troubled hearts the light of hope and strengthen in us the gift of faith, in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

*In place of the Gospel, a reading by Kevin Trainor from 'Finding Silence':*

We read how early on the Sabbath, three days after the death of Jesus, while it is still dark, Mary who loved Jesus so deeply that Judas was shocked by the excess of her love, comes to the tomb and is distressed to find it empty, Jesus' body gone. 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where to find him,' she cries. She is overwhelmed, as we so often are, by grief, anger, bitterness engulfing us so that we can no longer see who is standing right in front of us. 'The meaning has gone out of our lives,' we cry. 'There is no sense any more. We are lost, and the one person, the one love, who did make sense of it all has been cruelly snatched away; even his body, even the memory of his love!' And then very quietly a voice speaks to us. 'Why are you weeping?' And we reply to that voice, not recognising it, 'Because my life is empty! And I no longer know where my love, my life, is.' Then it is, in that hushed garden, as dawn is breaking, the sun inching up over the hills and the first birds singing, that the voice speaks our name so softly in the stillness, saying Mary! James! Hywel! Celia! That voice speaks our name as no one else will ever speak it or can say it, and we know then that we are recognised. He whom we thought we had lost has found us and knows us as we truly are, what we are capable of, and what we can be. He sees us in the fullness of our being, as we yearn to be and stumble to become. And like Mary we cry out to the Divine Beloved with joy, reaching our arms to enfold him, saying 'Master! Friend! Beloved! Teacher!'

*Hymn: Simple Gifts, a Shaker hymn*

*(Soloist)*

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free.  
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,  
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,  
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

When true simplicity is gained,  
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,  
To turn, turn will be our delight  
'Til by turning, turning, we come round right.

*(All)*

**'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free.  
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,  
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,  
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.**

**When true simplicity is gained,  
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,  
To turn, turn will be our delight  
'Til by turning, turning, we come round right.**

*A pause for silence, ended with the strike of James' Tibetan singing bowl,  
and then the following prayer by John Donne*

Bring us, O Lord our God, at our last awakening  
into the house and gate of Heaven,  
to enter into that gate and dwell in that house,  
where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light;  
no noise or silence, but one equal music;  
no fears or hopes, but one equal possession;  
no ends or beginnings, but one equal eternity:  
in the habitations of Thy majesty and glory, world without end.

**All: Amen.**

Throughout the day at intervals, and whenever he woke in the night, James would say his mantra:

'God is present. God is here. God is now.'

So let us now join James in saying these words slowly:

**All: God is present. God is here. God is now.**

*A pause for silence, ended as before*

*The Lord's Prayer*

The word 'Abba' has been wrongly translated as 'Father'. It is an Aramaic word, the language Jesus spoke, which means: Parent, Mother and Father. It also carries a second meaning, that of the source and origin of all things. And this is how James always said the Lord's Prayer, as we do now:

**All: Abba, Mother, Father, source and origin of all things,  
Who art in heaven  
Hallowed be Thy Name.  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive them that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation  
But deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory  
For ever and ever.  
Amen.**

*Dominic Bevan sings 'Where'er You Walk' from Handel's Semele*



## *The Commendation*

We are gathered together here around the body of James, all that is left of him, to pay our last respects, and to do justice to his life and death. Rather than his body we are left with his name, which we now speak with reverence and affection:

**All: James (or Jimmie)**

Lord God, remember this name which he was given by other people, the name that is written in the palm of Your hand. As a sign of our hope that God will give a new and immortal body to James, and to all of us, I bless James' body in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word. No one lives for himself. And now, in the words of Prospero to Ariel let us all say:

**All: To the elements be free!**

No one dies for himself. Whether we live or whether we die, we are in God and God is in us.

Let us now go in peace. We let James go and place him in the care of the living God. And may our prayers accompany James on his way.

*Wachet auf* by J S Bach

*Marjorie leads the coffin down the nave, carrying the candle from the coffin, followed by friends and members of the meditation group. There will be a pause at the back of the Church as Marjorie says the words of the Committal*

*Refreshments follow in the Church*

*Coda: A farewell tribute to James by Rowan, Lord Williams of Oystermouth,  
Archbishop of Canterbury 2003 - 2012*

James' long life was characterized all through by courage, imagination and generosity in impressive quantities. The imaginative energy of his work in the theatre has left a rich legacy in all kinds of ways: he was one of those who stubbornly refused to see theatre as anything other than a profoundly serious matter of creating meaningful community. The word 'serious' most definitely does not here mean subdued or gloomy or negative; it simply describes action (acting) that has creative consequences for how human beings inhabit their world and their bodies. Hence the deep connection with James' concern with ritual and with the disciplines of meditation, with the steady and quiet nurture of self-awareness. And, as the spiritual classics all say, it is out of that kind of self-awareness – patient, realistic, attentive, un-anxious – that generosity flows.

The work with Hywel over many years at Bleddfa tells its own story of his commitment to holding together what some people, both in the Arts and in the Church, would prefer to keep quarantined. He knew that the exploring of our depths as human beings did not sit well with these territorial anxieties about 'art' and 'religion', and the experience of countless people at and around Bleddfa will bear out the sense of release felt by those on both sides of these and other divides. A generous place and a hospitable one, about which he wrote wonderfully – my first real contact with him was through Bleddfa, with the invitation to bless the statue of Tobias, the angel and the dog which stands outside the Centre. It expresses vividly the interweaving of the different strata of creation in which we have to find ourselves – the very opposite of the straining of driven humanity towards isolated dominion in the world; a vision both serious and finally comic.

A couple of weeks before his death, James sent me a photograph of the chapel at the Franciscan friary in Glasshampton, where he had spent many hours; and in the accompanying letter, he wrote – paraphrasing Teilhard de Chardin – that 'in old age, God is hollowing us out so that we may become full of his Love'. And he ended with 'words that once came to me in meditation: God is an endless journey'.

The letter was a Christmas letter, sent well in advance because of the insecurities of the postal service just at the moment. It has an extra resonance because of this. Christmas is something to do with the unceasing journey of God into the centre of the world, including the centre of the human heart. That was the journey James undertook in his work as writer, actor, director, spiritual director and friend. He brought many with him on the journey; and we are here not just to remember him but to draw breath for our own share in that endless ongoing discovering.





*Keep innocence – Psalm 37:38*